REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE WORK OF THE ORGANIZATION

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OFFICIAL RECORDS: FORTY-FIFTH SESSION

SUPPLEMENT No. 1 (A/45/1)

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New York, 1991

[*Original: English/French/Spanish*]
[*16 September 1990*]

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

I

The period we have entered is Janus-faced. It wears both the aspect of hope and the countenance of dangerous unrestraint. In one major segment of world affairs, we have witnessed political change of a phenomenal character. In large parts of the globe, however, the scene continues to be one of simmering resentments, violent collisions and at best a precarious peace. The question whether the more beneficial developments of 1989-1990 will have a healthy impact on the totality of the world situation is still unanswered.

The ending of the cold war has meant the abandonment of the many assumptions that throttled progress in international affairs, bred chronic suspicion and fear and polarized the world. The lessons it conveys both for social thought and for purposes of practical policy are manifold. From the viewpoint of the United Nations, however, three of its characteristics have a global significance.

First, the revolutionary developments in Eastern and Central Europe have given powerful expression to two of the cardinal principles of the Charter of the United Nations: self-determination of peoples and respect for human rights.

Second, it has been strikingly demonstrated that a *status quo* based primarily on the military factor is bound to prove fragile.

Third, the larger—and saner—concept of security, encompassing all its dimensions, which has begun to emerge is precisely the one the United Nations has been expounding all through the years. It has been a stable theme at the United Nations that an obsession with military security results in a self-perpetuating arms race, distorts priorities, hampers social and economic progress, constrains political dialogue, affects the institutions of the State to their long-term detriment, and aggravates the sense of insecurity in all nations. What often sounded a voice in the wilderness has now gained a volume and resonance it lacked before.

Thus, the very change that has rendered obsolete the whole architecture of the cold war serves to reveal afresh the design for peace which the United Nations is meant to execute. Nothing in the constructive refashioning that has taken place in Europe nor in the destructive trends exploding elsewhere requires a modification of the purposes and principles of the Organization as laid down in its Charter. In fact, in this respect, the Charter gains richer meaning as political evolution progressively enlarges and clarifies the scope of its principles.

The United Nations, therefore, enters the post-cold war era as a central point of constancy in the midst of flux. Through years of patient effort, it has achieved a complementarity in the working of its different organs which makes it far better fitted to fulfil its onerous tasks. The exercise of the authority of the Security Council in the manner envisaged in the Charter, the many instances of the General Assembly and the Council reinforcing each other's efforts, the close co-operation between the Council as a whole and the Secretary-General, the growing role of the Secretariat as represented by the Secretary-General in undertaking increasingly diversified missions of peace, and the revitalized role being contemplated for the Economic and Social Council—all these testify to a strengthening of the institutions embodied in the Organization.

With its ability thus enhanced and its relevance emphasized by the process of change, three broad objectives define its mandate. It has to try to eliminate the seeds of war in all areas of the globe and, in so doing, squarely face the fact that new sources of conflict are emerging in our age. It has to serve as the prime instrument for extending the spirit of co-operation to those spheres—economic relations between nations and humanity's social problems—which are seemingly non-political but have profound political implications. It has to strive unremittingly to ensure that international affairs are governed by the rule of law and universal respect for human rights.

This is an ambitious agenda but a rapidly changing world asks for nothing less.

II

As we survey the political scene, we see the dawn of a new era in Europe, streaks of light in some regions and the darkness of old animosities and new hatreds enveloping others.

The unification of the two German States and the changes in Eastern Europe have signalled the end of the entrenched division from which Europe suffered ever since the Second World War. A remarkable feature of the whole process, which has transformed the political shape of the continent in the span of less than one year, has been the high level of understanding, far-sightedness and respect for popular will that has been exhibited by all the parties concerned, including the global Powers. Nothing could better reflect a fundamental change in relations between those Powers and promise to open a more constructive chapter of world history. It is noteworthy that, in a different region, this year also witnessed the establishment of the new Republic of Yemen when the two Yemeni States decided peacefully to unite.

Indeed, in a climate created by palpable signs of new attitudes and perceptions, the expectation grew that the quality of openness pervading Europe now and the choice for peace that Europe has made would prevail elsewhere as well. However, recent developments, like the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, remind us of the danger of underestimating the political density of the globe and

the variety of factors behind the current situations of tension in other continents. An optimistic view can be sustained only when the peaceful settlement of disputes becomes a consistent practice all over the world and when the anxieties and the causes of unrest in the international community as a whole are fully addressed.

This report is being written at an extraordinary point in time when developments are taking place so rapidly that today's perspective on a situation may have shifted tomorrow. While this inevitably makes some observations tentative, I propose to look first at the brighter side of the picture.

During the year under review, the United Nations has had remarkable success in conducting a variety of operations aimed at managing peaceful transitions in societies which were the scenes of conflicts or had suffered upheavals. Given such a purpose, these operations have so many different facets and have so combined elements of peace-keeping and peace-making as to have radically altered traditional concepts of the arrangement between the two. Formerly, peace-keeping was understood to mean essentially to control or contain conflicts while peace-making was meant to resolve them. A deeper and more active involvement of the United Nations has over time, however, increasingly shown that peace-making itself determines, as it should, the size, scope and duration of peace-keeping as conventionally understood and that it is often by a fusion of the two in an integral undertaking that peace can genuinely be brought to troubled areas. I am referring here in particular to the complex operation mounted in Namibia and several others conducted in Central America. All of them have yielded new insights which can be most useful as the United Nations is called upon to deal with other and even more complicated situations in future. Whatever political obstacles to the solution of thorny problems may be encountered in other places, the practicability of physically putting a solution in place through the management of the United Nations, given the requisite support of Member States, need no longer be in question.

Namibia has shown the reward of perseverance in the quest of just solutions to international disputes. Nearly a quarter century after the General Assembly first adopted a resolution on the territory's status and a dozen years after the Security Council laid out a settlement plan for its independence, through a tortuous process which went through alternating phases of hope and frustration, the United Nations reached its goal this year. The time span between the formulation and the achievement of the aim could, and should, have been shorter, but the result could not have been more convincing. Personally, it brought to me gratifying fulfilment of a priority I had set myself when I assumed my present responsibilities.

The Namibian experience was a striking demonstration of the results that can be achieved by multilateral effort, by the active engagement of the principal organs of the United Nations and by the members of the Security Council and other States undertaking a crucial role in negotiations conducted with the parties. It was a focus on the prime objective that ensured the convergence of the diplomatic efforts launched from several fronts. The United Nations Transition Assistance Group in Namibia (UNTAG) turned out to be something far more than its somewhat pedestrian name implied. It established the workability of democratic procedures even in a terrain which at first looked most unpromising. It also proved the executive ability of the United Nations in successfully managing a complex operation, which brought together 8,000 men and women from more than 100 nations, all united in the aim of peacefully bringing a country to independence through modalities set out by the Security Council.

The settlement of the question of Namibia has had a healthy impact on the situation in southern Africa. The official United Nations team which I sent in June to South Africa, with the agreement of the South African Government, observed that the country had reached the threshold of a new era. The political process towards dismantling the *apartheid* system is yet at an early stage and difficulties are still caused by the continuance of *apartheid* structures, questionable police practices, repressive laws and politically-related violence. Nor can the fear and anxiety which accompany the fundamental transformation of a society be underestimated.

However, progress has been made towards establishing an atmosphere conducive to negotiations. The situation was recently given an impetus by the joint declaration of the South African Government and the African National Congress that aimed at accelerating the political process towards a negotiated settlement through various measures, including the release of political prisoners and reviewing current security legislation. The announcement by the African National Congress of the suspension of all armed actions has also been a significant development. Unfortunately, these promising events have been marred in recent weeks by a marked increase in the incidence of violence, resulting in innumerable casualties and jeopardizing political dialogue. This issue needs to be addressed urgently at the highest level by all concerned.

The prospect of a non-racial democracy in South Africa in the not-too-distant future is no longer unrealistic. This would carry a significance far beyond that of profound and beneficial change in a large and pluralistic society. It would mean the realization of one of the objectives of the United Nations which goes to the root of the justice and stability of international relations envisaged in the Charter.

The United Nations has undertaken a wide range of endeavours pertaining to peace in Central America in the past year, in pursuance of the goals of the Agreement known as Esquipulas II. The Organization's involvement in the region is very complex and varied and demands on it have required versatility and constant adaptation, using a variety of frequently innovative means. Last October I appointed a personal representative for the Central American peace process in order to assist me in co-ordinating the discharge of these many-faceted endeavours.

The Organization played a major part in resolving the conflict in Nicaragua. A United Nations Observer Mission (ONUVEN) monitored the preparation and holding of free and fair elections in February, the first such operation authorized and conducted by the Organization internally in a Member State. The success of this endeavour led to a central role for the Organization in the peaceful transfer of power in a region where in the past such transfers have been the exception rather than the rule.

In the context of the International Commission of Support and Verification (CIAV), the United Nations

assumed a key role in the voluntary demobilization of the members of the Nicaraguan Resistance. The Commission, which I together with the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS) established in response to a request by the Central American Presidents, was instrumental in obtaining the agreement by the Nicaraguan Resistance to demobilize. With the operational support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), CIAV is assisting in their resettlement in Nicaragua.

The task of receiving and destroying the weapons of the members of the Nicaraguan Resistance and of verifying the cease-fire which made possible their demobilization inside Nicaragua was discharged by the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA), the first United Nations peace-keeping operation in the region, whose original mandate was to verify compliance by the five Central American Governments with their security commitments entered into in Esquipulas II.

Late last year the five Central American Presidents requested me to engage more actively in diplomatic efforts in search of solutions to conflicts in the region, specifically in El Salvador. I was asked to find ways for Powers from outside the region to support these efforts. With my assistance, the Government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN) agreed in April to launch a negotiating process under my auspices for the purpose of speedily ending through political means the armed conflict which has torn that nation for a decade as well as to promote the democratization of the country, guarantee unrestricted respect for human rights and reunify Salvadorian society.

The initial goal set for the negotiation is to achieve political agreements on a number of issues in order to secure a cease-fire, to be verified by the United Nations. With the full and active participation of my representative, a partial accord has to date been reached on a text regarding respect for human rights, which provides for an unprecedented scheme for long-term, nation-wide monitoring by the United Nations. The Organization is also expected to play a role in overseeing the process which is to lead to elections in March 1991.

The issues involved, however, are deeply rooted and complex. They touch upon the structure of the State and the fabric of society. In addition to human rights, the judicial and electoral systems and economic and social questions, the central issue is that of the armed forces, including their relationship with the civilian authorities and the role of the military apparatus in society. As elsewhere in Latin America, the issue of how to deal with the past is also at the forefront of the agenda. The negotiation in progress holds the potential of leading to a positive transformation of Salvadorian society, which would strengthen the link, embodied in Esquipulas II, between the establishment of peace and the consolidation of democracy.

It is thus understandable that it has not yet been possible to reach the initial goal and that the war consequently goes on in El Salvador. I remain convinced that this process can succeed if the parties unswervingly adhere to their April undertakings and there is strong support from outside Powers that are in a position to provide it. Without such adherence and support, however, there is no end to the war in sight.

In March, a process was launched with the ultimate purpose of seeking a political solution to the internal armed confrontation in Guatemala. This effort, under the auspices of the Guatemalan National Reconciliation Commission, a body established in conformity with Esquipulas II, has to date involved the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) and political parties as well as social forces of that country, and in due course is to lead to conversations between the Government and the Armed Forces and URNG. An observer appointed by me is attending the talks. It is my hope that this effort, which has begun auspiciously, will usher in a process leading to peace and national reconciliation in this long-suffering nation.

Encouraging progress continues to be made towards resolving the problem of Western Sahara. We have now not only an agreed set of proposals and a timetable for their implementation, but also a plan approved in June by the Security Council. This plan provides for holding a referendum which will enable the people of Western Sahara to determine their future without military or administrative constraints.

In July, I dispatched a technical mission to the territory and to neighbouring countries to refine the administrative aspects of the implementation of the plan and to obtain the necessary data for an estimate of the cost of the operation. I am in the process of submitting a further report to the Security Council in this regard.

Contacts with the parties concerned, Morocco and Frente Polisario, as well as with the observers to the peace process, Algeria and Mauritania, have continued throughout. Close contact has also been maintained with the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity. In March, I visited the region and renewed discussions with the leaders of Morocco and the Frente Polisario whose continued support and co-operation has been essential to the progress of our efforts.

A critical element in the organization of the referendum will be the problem of identifying those eligible to vote. Taking into account the social structure of Western Sahara, the acknowledged tribal leaders will have a particularly important role to play in the process. In this context, a representative group of tribal leaders from Western Sahara was invited to meet with the Identification Commission in Geneva so that they could be briefed on the Commission's terms of reference and the methods of work it would adopt. I have also endeavoured to ensure that the actual process of such identification, and of the referendum itself, should be clear and fully understood by the people directly involved.

Without wishing to minimize the complexity and dimensions of the task before us, I am of the view that, given the co-operation and political will displayed by the parties, a solution to this long-standing problem is well within our grasp.

There is now a widely-shared belief that a solution to the conflict in Cambodia may be within reach. The agreement on a framework for a comprehensive political settlement based on an enhanced role of the United Nations, which was reached by the five permanent members of the Security Council at the end of August, and the recent decision of the Cambodian parties in Jakarta to accept this framework and to form a Supreme National Council represent major steps forward in the negotiating process. I earnestly hope that all parties concerned will pursue this process vigorously, so

that the Paris Conference on Cambodia can be reconvened to finalize and conclude a comprehensive peace agreement. The time has come to put an end to the fighting and to the long suffering endured by the Cambodian people. The establishment of a durable peace will ultimately depend, however, on a genuine national reconciliation among the Cambodians, as well as on the full support and co-operation of all the parties directly or indirectly involved in this tragic conflict.

Over the past year, I have continued to work closely with the parties concerned and to make my good offices available as needed, in order to contribute to the negotiating process. In early February, I established a Secretariat task force on Cambodia. Since then, I have dispatched four fact-finding missions to the country, in order to gather information and data relevant to an eventual United Nations operation in Cambodia. The United Nations will, of course, be prepared to assume in Cambodia any appropriate role which is agreed by the parties and approved by the Security Council. However, I cannot over-emphasize the need to ensure that the mandate that may ultimately be entrusted to the United Nations is realistic, clearly defined and practicable in operational terms. It is also essential that the Organization be provided with sufficient resources, in a timely and assured manner, so that an efficient operation can be implemented with a reasonable chance of success.

My efforts concerning the Cyprus problem have focused last year on finding a way to complete the outline of an overall agreement, as the leaders of the two communities had agreed in June 1989. As I have reported to the Security Council, it has not yet been possible to achieve this goal, and I am concerned by the lack of movement in the negotiating process and the deteriorating situation on the island.

At the same time, I have been encouraged by the active involvement of the Security Council, which on several occasions during the past year was unanimous in stressing the importance it attached to an early negotiated settlement of the Cyprus problem. In resolution 649 (1990), the Council confirmed and clarified the lines along which a solution is to be sought, and in its statement of 19 July 1990 it endorsed my plan of action for completing the outline and launching the negotiations for an overall agreement. These developments offer a basis for progress, provided both sides heed the Council's call to co-operate with me, promote reconciliation, and are willing to deal with the issues in a manner amenable to compromise.

Over the last 12 months, the suffering of the Afghan people has continued and the number of refugees in Pakistan and Iran has remained basically unchanged. At the international level, however, there has been progress in the direction of a consensus among the Guarantor Powers and the countries neighbouring Afghanistan.

Such an international consensus is necessary in my view, in order to encourage an Afghan political process which in turn would enable the Afghan people to exercise, unhindered, their right of self-determination. In my recent efforts, I have particularly focused on promoting such a consensus and the responses I have received so far from the Governments concerned clearly indicate a desire to achieve a settlement through political means. During my contacts with all segments of the Afghan leadership, I made clear the readiness of the United Nations to assist them, in whatever way they would deem appropriate, to begin a political process leading to the establishment of a broad-based government. The opportunity now exists for collective and concerted efforts, both at the national and international levels, to achieve a resolution of the conflict.

While a spirit of conciliation prevails in many areas of the world today, new and alarming dangers have arisen in the Middle East in recent weeks. Throughout my tenure as Secretary-General, I have repeatedly underscored the need for a comprehensive settlement of the complex issues facing this region, pointing out that a deterioration of the situation in one area almost invariably has repercussions elsewhere. The events that began on 2 August 1990, and the developments that were set in motion as a result, illustrate this point vividly.

The invasion and purported annexation of the State of Kuwait by Iraq has evoked an historic response from the Security Council. In a series of resolutions without precedent, the Council has established that such actions, which are in direct contravention of the principles of the Charter and international law, cannot be committed with impunity. The Council promptly condemned the invasion, demanded that Iraq withdraw immediately and unconditionally all its forces, called upon Iraq and Kuwait to begin immediately intensive negotiations for the resolution of their differences and expressed support of all efforts in this regard, especially those of the League of Arab States. When the demand was not complied with, the Council imposed economic sanctions under Chapter VII of the Charter in order to bring the invasion and occupation of Kuwait by Iraq to an end and restore the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Kuwait. The Council further declared the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq as null and void. As regards the situation of the nationals of third countries in Kuwait and Iraq, the Council demanded that Iraq permit and facilitate their immediate departure and take no action to jeopardize their safety, security or health. It also demanded that Iraq rescind its orders for the closure of diplomatic and consular missions in Kuwait and the withdrawal of the immunity of their personnel. The continuing non-compliance by Iraq with the Security Council's demands led to the Council's call upon "those Member States co-operating with the Government of Kuwait which are deploying maritime forces to the area to use such measures commensurate to the specific circumstances as may be necessary under the authority of the Security Council...to ensure strict implementation" of the provisions laid down in the resolution relating to economic sanctions. In this connection, States were requested to co-ordinate their actions, using, as appropriate, mechanisms of the Military Staff Committee. The Council has emphasized that it alone, or acting through its Committee established under resolution 661 (1990), can determine whether humanitarian circumstances have arisen in which it will be necessary for foodstuffs to be supplied to the civilian population in Iraq or Kuwait in order to relieve human suffering. Though the outcome of this crisis may not be predictable at the moment, these resolutions are bound to remain of definitive importance in the application of the rule of law in safeguarding the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Member States.

The invasion of Kuwait has also caused a human tragedy of immense proportions, the dimensions of which are still incalculable. Hundreds of thousands of third-country nationals residing in the area have been rendered destitute overnight; many of them have been left without the means to support their families, much less to return to their countries of origin, which are themselves staggering under the economic effects of this crisis. International relief efforts have begun to respond to the enormous demands that have been created, not only in providing temporary shelter and sustenance to a displaced population now spread throughout five countries, but also in making transport available for those seeking to leave the area. I have appointed a personal representative to assist me in these efforts. Meanwhile, the decision by Iraq to restrict the movement of nationals of certain countries has heightened tension, and continues to be a source of profound concern to the international community.

It is clear that progress cannot be made on the overall situation in the region, including the Arab-Israeli conflict, until the present crisis is set on the way to solution in accordance with the position taken by the Security Council. It is disappointing to note that an impasse has been reached in the effort to promote a dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians. The *intifadah* will soon enter its fourth year and, regrettably, the situation in the occupied territories remains bleak, with little hope of early progress. I continue to believe that, in addition to the efforts to promote a dialogue, the Security Council could make an important contribution to the process by renewing its commitment to resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) which, in my view, together with the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people, including self-determination, can constitute the basis of a just and lasting peace in the area.

Since my last report, relations between Iran and Iraq have improved and it has thus been possible to implement important aspects of Security Council resolution 598 (1987), with the United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group fulfilling the role assigned to it. In this connection, withdrawal to the internationally recognized boundaries has taken place and prisoners of war are now being repatriated and are rejoining their families in accordance with the Treaty and Conventions to which Iran and Iraq are parties. It is worth recalling, however, that resolution 598 (1987) is a comprehensive peace plan, and certain of its elements have yet to be fulfilled, including its paragraph 8 which envisages the search for measures to enhance the stability and security of the region. This remains most relevant at this stage.

The Middle East as a whole continues to be the most explosive region of the world today. Long-standing grievances, which have festered for years, have been aggravated by an escalating arms race throughout the area, which has spawned a deadly arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. In the long run, lasting peace will come to the Middle East only when the principles of international law govern the relations between States, when disputes are resolved through peaceful means, when the aspirations of those deprived of their rights have been fulfilled, and regional security and economic arrangements—which take into account the concerns of all the parties in the area—have been established.

III

It has been said that, twice in this century, after two devastating wars, the possibilities of building a peaceful global order were not fully realized. There is, of course, no doubt that the establishment of the world Organization, the adoption of its Charter, the liquidation of colonialism and the acceptance in principle of universal standards of human rights have been nothing less than new departures in history. However, the fact remains that no coherent strategy of peace was put in place. The reasons for this failure need hardly be recapitulated. What is beyond controversy is that we are now presented with a unique opportunity to work out such a strategy.

A refreshed political will and long-term thinking that is not overwhelmed by the perceptions and concerns of the moment is an absolute essential for seizing the opportunity. So is a clear understanding of the means that can be employed for making, keeping and building the peace. These three overlapping lines of endeavour need to be pursued with equal determination. As I have said earlier, it is the effort of peace-making or conflict resolution that sets the stage for, and determines, peace-keeping or conflict control. To gain time, and establish an environment, for the settlement of the dispute underlying a conflict is, of course, always an immediate necessity—this is the rationale of peace-keeping operations as traditionally understood. But it can sometimes result in temporizing if it is not accompanied by, or does not directly lead to, a negotiated solution of the dispute and, where necessary, an operation implementing that solution. Both these are to be seen as part of the wider effort of creating conditions in which the opposite claims or interests of States are purged of the character of violent hostility.

There has been a variety of situations over four decades in which the mounting of operations by the United Nations has been found indispensable. In essence, a United Nations peace-keeping operation is one which, mounted with the consent of the parties concerned, involves the deployment of international military personnel under an integrated command combined with civilian elements, all acting under the authority and discipline of the Organization, in order to stop or avert fighting and help facilitate or implement a settlement. As the consent of the parties concerned is crucial to their mandate, such operations are to be distinguished from measures under Chapter VII of the Charter.

From 1948 onwards, the United Nations has launched 18 operations, five of them during 1988 and 1989. Indeed, in recent years, the Organization's role in combinations of peace-keeping and peace-making has expanded impressively. The composite nature of these recent operations means that the tasks assigned to them have multiplied. The United Nations Transition Assistance Group in Namibia provides a standing example of important civilian and police components working together with military elements to secure the implementation of a complex peace plan under its supervision and control. The delicate mission accomplished in Nicaragua also illustrated the versatile forms that undertakings assigned to the Secretariat by the competent organs of the United Nations can take.

The conditions for the success of these operations remain what they have always been: a precise and work-

able mandate, the consent and co-operation of the parties involved, the consistent support of the Security Council, the readiness of Member States to volunteer personnel and adequate financial arrangements. The pre-supposition in meeting all these conditions is freedom from uncertainty: doubts with regard to any one of them can jeopardize an operation, threaten the security of the personnel employed, imperil peace, cost human lives and, indeed, subvert the purpose of the undertaking. Moreover, a large and complex operation, such as the one conducted in Namibia and likely to be decided upon in Cambodia, El Salvador and Western Sahara, takes long planning and preparation, while the implementation of a settlement acquires an urgency as soon as it is agreed upon. It is extremely difficult to reconcile these two requirements in the Organization's existing administrative and financial situation. We are being asked to do more with fewer resources and even those are sometimes provided too late.

The disparity between responsibilities and resources can nowhere be as crippling—and dangerous—as in this matter. I call upon Member States to review again my proposals for the establishment of a reserve stock of basic peace-keeping equipment and supplies, earmarking of military personnel, assurance of the necessary logistical and technological support, increase in the working capital fund and dependable contributions of cash. It is also foreseeable that, in some cases, advance authority will need to be given to the Secretary-General to commit funds in order to enable him to set up the operation within a politically-acceptable time-frame. The whole point is that we have reached a stage where limits to improvisation have come glaringly into view.

From the administrative point of view, peace-keeping operations have to be very closely co-ordinated, both at Headquarters and in the field. I have, for this purpose, set up a Senior Planning and Monitoring Group within the Secretariat.

The growing urge to resolve situations of conflict, the striking success of the operations in Namibia and Nicaragua and the prospect of those in Cambodia, El Salvador and Western Sahara have all encouraged reflections on the possible extension of the principles of United Nations operations to other situations not identical with those in which they have been mounted so far. I believe that some caveats are necessary on this point. Apart from the fact that United Nations operations require authorization by the competent organ, they are suitable only in cases which meet certain criteria. First, they are called for primarily in situations with a clear international dimension. Second, should they involve the monitoring of an election or referendum, they should cover the entire electoral process in order to secure conditions of fairness and impartiality. Where the induction of a United Nations presence in the electoral process of a State at a critical point in its political life is sought by the Government concerned and approved by the competent organ of the United Nations, it is necessary that there is broad public support in the State for the United Nations assuming such a role. Third, United Nations operations can be mounted only at clearly defined points in location and strategy, and not in situations of an indeterminate character.

Encouraging though the successes of operations mounted by the United Nations are and large though the range of their possible applications might be, the responsibility of negotiating settlements of international disputes or the obligation of accepting the terms laid down for them by the Security Council rests on the parties concerned. In a recent statement, the Security Council has stressed that a peace-keeping operation is essentially a temporary measure and that its mandate is not automatically renewable. Experience has shown that the mere continuance of a peace-keeping operation does not by itself generate movement towards a settlement. This is not a comforting thought, but it cannot be dismissed on that account.

To organize peace-making efforts in all situations of unresolved conflict is a primary challenge at the stage we have reached in the evolution of global society. There is now a manifest need to harness all available diplomatic capabilities for bringing about just and lasting resolution of conflicts that threaten or endanger the peace. These capabilities are not, and need not always be, employed solely through the United Nations.

Voluntary mediation outside the United Nations by Member States is, and will always remain, one of the means for the pacific settlement of disputes and also one of the ways in which Governments articulate their foreign policies and use or enhance their influence. What, however, needs to be carefully considered is how far the exertions made independently of the United Nations to resolve major regional conflicts have succeeded in cutting through the tangles and in narrowing the differences between the disputants to the degree necessary for meaningful negotiations. The question involved here bears upon the potentialities of a focused and systematic multilateral effort as compared to its alternatives.

There seems to be a lingering impression that a diplomatic initiative by a Member State or regional organization, dispensing with the procedures of the United Nations, is tidier, quicker and likely to be more fruitful than one made through the United Nations. The evidence so far is at least ambiguous, if not altogether discouraging.

What distinguishes the handling of a dispute by the United Nations is that it permits full expression to all the relevant interests and viewpoints and does not seek to abridge any vital aspect of a situation, including the aspect of justice and human rights, for the sake of speedy disposal. Then again, in recent years, the United Nations has increasingly used methods—in the consultations of the Security Council and in the exercise of good offices by the Secretary-General—that have the effect of avoiding unproductive argument and of discerning the lines along which just solutions can be sought. It should now be evident that the United Nations is more than a forum of debate; it is also a place or vehicle of purposeful negotiations.

Here, a wider understanding is required from Member States, especially the most influential ones. Even with all its recent successes in the resolution of conflicts and its pronounced role in crisis management, the United Nations will still remain in danger of being bypassed and sidelined if, in pursuance of their interests, Member States individually or in regional groupings choose to undertake efforts which are not in harmony with those of the United Nations or the principles of the Charter. This is less a matter of upholding the prestige of the Organization than of avoiding incoherence, dispersal and fragmentation in the peace effort. The emergence of a collegial spirit among the perma-

nent members of the Security Council provides an indispensable safeguard against this danger but, as I said in my report last year, agreement among the major Powers must carry with it the support of a majority of Member States if it is to make the desired impact on the world situation. It is the willing endorsement of the decisions of the Security Council by the international community that can best counter any impression, likely to create anxiety, of world affairs being run by a directorate.

Apart from this, I believe that the peace-making capacity of the United Nations would be considerably strengthened if the Security Council had a peace agenda that is not confined to items formally inscribed at the requests of Member States, and if it held periodic meetings to survey the political scene and identify points of danger at which preventive or anticipatory diplomacy is required. Since the proceedings of such meetings need not necessarily be published, they would encourage candid discussions without making parties to disputes harden their positions. Nor would the reports of the Secretary-General to such meetings amount to an invocation by him of Article 99 of the Charter. There is little use in encumbering the peace effort with formal procedures when such procedures are not likely to lead to results conducive to peace. Other ways to strengthen the Council's role in dealing with incipient disputes lie in improving fact-finding arrangements, in establishing a United Nations presence in unstable areas and in instituting subsidiary bodies, where appropriate, for preventive diplomacy.

In this context, it needs to be stressed again that the means at present at the disposal of the Secretary-General for gathering the timely, accurate and unbiased information that is necessary for averting violent conflicts are inadequate. I made suggestions in this regard in my report last year and I would urge Member States to consider afresh ways of enabling the Secretariat to monitor potential conflict situations from a clearly impartial standpoint. The strategy of peace must reflect a better regard for timing than has been the case so far. The Organization's mediatory or investigative capacity should not be kept in reserve until it is too late to avert hostilities.

Once a dispute or a situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute is investigated and considered by the Security Council, it becomes the responsibility of the Council to recommend appropriate procedures or methods of adjustment. The divisive and distracting factors that operated in the past and made the Council indecisive have now largely disappeared and we are faced with the question how to ensure that parties to disputes abide by the Council's resolutions.

This, in turn, raises the question of how best a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression can be countered through the resources of persuasion, influence or concerted pressure at the disposal of the Security Council. The essentiality of the provisions of Chapter VII to the system of collective security envisaged in the Charter is, of course, beyond doubt or dispute. Peace-making would lack the firmness and authority it needs if the Council were not in a position to issue salutary and credible warnings of enforcement measures and to resort to such measures when its warnings went unheeded. As the swift response to the challenge thrown by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait has shown, the new atmosphere prevailing in the Security Council has for the first time enabled the Council to exercise the authority vested in it by the Charter.

Any situation calling for action under Chapter VII of the Charter is certain to have its own peculiarities. However, it seems to be widely recognized that such action is a measure of last resort, which should not mean the abandonment of the necessary diplomatic effort to negotiate a solution in conformity with the principles of the Charter. Indeed, recourse to the provisions of enforcement must itself be consistently based on principle and a sense of equity and perceived to be so.

Moreover, the conditions of our time clearly suggest some of the requirements for enforcement action to succeed. In the economic sphere, the special problems arising for one or more States from the carrying out of measures under Chapter VII must be comprehensively foreseen and speedy remedies envisaged for them. Article 50 recognizes this need. In today's vastly more complicated and interdependent conditions as compared to those of four decades ago, this entails addressing the chain effects of economic action. In the political sphere, all measures of enforcement must be seen to issue from a collective engagement, which requires complete unity of aim as defined by the Council and which imposes a discipline all its own. The role of the Military Staff Committee in the making of plans for the application of armed force is clearly laid down in Articles 46 and 47 of the Charter. Then again, enforcement measures must be so applied that they do not cause an unintended economic or political fall-out which can outspread the specified area of involvement and defeat the original purpose of the action taken by the Council.

The rule of law in international affairs should also be promoted by a greater recourse to the International Court of Justice in not only adjudicating disputes of a legal nature, but also in rendering advisory opinion on the legal aspects of a dispute. Article 96 of the Charter authorizes the General Assembly and the Security Council to request such an opinion from the Court. I believe that the extension of this authority to the Secretary-General would greatly add to the means of peaceful solutions of international crisis situations. The suggestion is prompted by the complementary relationship between the Security Council and the Secretary-General and by the consideration that almost all situations bearing upon international peace and security require the strenuous exercise of the good offices of the Secretary-General.

IV

To build peace and create conditions of stability in the world of the 1990s will require innovative responses to security challenges of a type radically different from those encountered in the past. The effort, however, will be adrift unless it is firmly anchored in the principles of the Charter and is perceived to be so. While some old models can no longer be used and some traditional categories of thought are now inadequate, the principles of international ethics and human rights articulated by the Charter still hold.

Today, in a growing number of cases, threats to national and international security are no longer as neatly separable as they were before. In not a few countries,

civil strife takes a heavy toll of human life and has repercussions beyond national borders. The disintegration of the institutions of government and society in one country and senseless slaughter in another are two appalling instances. Separatism, by no means a rare phenomenon, causes strains on both the country directly affected and its immediate neighbours. Anarchy in one State means mass migrations which unsettle another. Then again, terrorism and drug trafficking cut across frontiers. So do environmental disasters. Furthermore, the rising consciousness of ethnic, linguistic or religious identities destabilizes some existing national formations while social breakdown in the wake of economic inequalities and the twin evils of poverty and repression tear apart the fabric of peace.

It seems that the era we are entering now may witness the institution of the nation-state being put on a harsher trial than any it has had to face in its history. Diverse forces are pulling it in diverse directions. In a politically stable environment, States are forming larger functional wholes; the outstanding example is the expected integration of the economies of the 12 industrial nations of Western Europe in 1992. Bearing in mind the trail of recurrent and internecine war blazed by nationalism in Europe until the middle of this century, this reformation carries a significance for the political evolution of the entire global community. On the opposite side, however, not a few States face the danger of decomposition as the sense of national affiliation is eroded by a variety of factors—political, economic or those relating to human rights. In many a case, fragile state structures are made even more vulnerable by lack of democratic accountability or by over-centralization. Extreme nationalism, violent ethnic rivalry, xenophobia and racial or cultural prejudice tend to fill a psychological void created by a perceived want of legitimacy or social justice. We cannot in this context forget that these destabilizing elements are not confined to any particular region of the world. Indeed, in the first half of this century, they led to cataclysmic consequences in Europe. Now, unless they are handled through ways implied in the Charter, they might ravage larger parts of the globe.

On a different level, economic forces make the nation-state more and more dependent on international co-operation. They do not permit that sense of self-sufficiency on which nationalism can thrive and isolationism take a stand. This is true both in settings of affluence and in conditions of deprivation. In the former case, with investment becoming increasingly transnational and horizontal alliances between corporations in different countries exerting greater weight on production, pricing, flow of resources and, to some extent, employment, it becomes more and more difficult for Governments to stabilize national economies without concerting policies with one another. Nor can the disruptive effects of hostile economic competition be dismissed. As for the less privileged countries, the very fact of dependence on external economic assistance entails profound political consequences. More often than not, the conditions on which it is rendered have an immediate impact on social situations.

How these processes will affect the world's political structure, whether the nation-state will be able to absorb the new pressures and, in so doing, undergo a change and how far into the future the present configuration of States will endure are questions that are difficult to answer, yet unwise to ignore. It is, however, plain that nationalism will become incapable of supporting State structures if it runs counter to international co-operation and becomes insensitive to the global concern for human rights.

Some people believe that the United Nations could develop an integrated plan for responding to these challenges. While such a plan might be conceivable in theory, it would be unworkable in practice as situations of diverse character arise. Moreover, not all the afflictions of societies can be remedied by multilateral action. The operative principles for such action derive from the full meaning of security in our time, from the relevance of economic and social developments to the issues of security and from the necessity to anticipate and prevent problems, help mitigate them should they occur and stimulate corrective measures to prevent them from recurring. This means maintaining a prompt, comprehensive and effective global watch rather than laying down a blueprint. It means monitoring transnational trends and developing the authority of the United Nations to the commensurate level.

For dealing with the new kinds of security challenges, regional arrangements or agencies can render assistance of great value. This presupposes the existence of the relationship between the United Nations and regional arrangements envisaged in Chapter VIII of the Charter. The defusion of tensions between States and the pacific settlement of local disputes are, in many cases, matters appropriate for regional action. The proviso, however, is that the efforts of regional agencies should be in harmony with those of the United Nations and in accordance with the Charter. This applies equally to regional arrangements in all areas of the globe, including those which might emerge in Europe. Moreover, the requirement stipulated in Article 54 of the Charter needs to be viewed not merely as a matter of form and procedure but as relating to the substance of the peace effort. If regional responses to situations affecting the maintenance of international peace and security and regional initiatives in dealing with them are supportive of the lines of policy indicated by the United Nations and do not sidetrack the United Nations, howsoever unwittingly, not only the coherence but also the effectiveness of a peace strategy would be greatly enhanced. Here again, it is the totality of the Charter rather than isolated elements of it that need to be brought to bear on the world situation.

There are many intangibles involved in the effort of building a just and stable order of peace that the world's statesmanship can discern. Some priorities have, however, been clearly identified through the work of the United Nations. The reduction of the level of weaponry and armed forces at the disposal of States, a universal human rights régime, a concerted response to the challenge posed by the deterioration of the environment and the population explosion, more equitable economic relations between nations and addressing the world's social problems are the main imperatives of the present situation. All bear upon peace.

V

A new security situation is being shaped at the global level by the rapid improvements in the relationship between East and West. Measures of disarmament, a

long-sought goal of the international community, have finally moved into the realm of the possible.

We are witnessing a situation in which political developments have fast overtaken the cautious pace of negotiations to limit arms and armaments. The doctrines which dominated military thought and planning throughout the decades following the Second World War have suddenly lost their relevance and applicability. Appropriate security structures need to be found to replace the adversarial strategies of the past.

The significance of the current process goes far beyond the sheer numbers of arms and armed forces involved. It is now widely recognized that the process of creating a system of confidence-building measures is indispensable in removing the mistrust and misjudgements that have been the root causes of the arms race. This recognition has given new meaning to, and validated, the principle of seeking undiminished security at progressively lower levels of armaments and armed forces.

But to claim that we have navigated the rough waters and are now sheltered from the unexpected would be naive and dangerous. As the explosive developments in the Persian Gulf region have sharply demonstrated in the past few weeks, many challenges have to be squarely addressed before the present positive trend can be deemed irreversible and indeed world wide. A number of long-standing concerns still hinder peaceful relations, while new ones are added to the international agenda. The early 1990s provide an opportunity for arms limitation and disarmament that we cannot afford to squander.

The overarching question of nuclear weapons continues to pose a complex issue in the strategic equation. Three concerns, however, deserve to be underscored in this context.

The first is the vital importance of progress in the bilateral negotiating process between the United States and the Soviet Union for deep cuts in their strategic arsenals. This process should eventually be expanded to incorporate all other types of nuclear weapons, including those of the other nuclear-weapon States. As long as the declared policies of some States do not contemplate a nuclear-free world it is difficult to foresee the elimination of all nuclear weapons. However, the fostering of a moral and political climate in which such weapons are stigmatized and foresworn is no longer utopian.

The second concern pertains to the cessation of nuclear-weapon tests about which differences still persist. The achievement of a comprehensive test-ban treaty must remain the prime objective, but pending its attainment the number of tests conducted each year and their respective yields should and can be significantly reduced.

The third concern focuses on the crucial need to maintain a viable régime for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Since the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was concluded in 1968, experience has revealed its shortcomings. It can be acknowledged that, in some ways, the Treaty imposes asymmetrical obligations. However, since no better arrangements have yet been devised, its basic aim of preventing nuclear proliferation must be upheld and promoted.

As we welcome the reduction of the nuclear stockpiles and hope that further reductions will follow, leading eventually to their elimination, it would be beyond reason to condone the emergence of any new nuclear-weapon State, potential or undeclared. The legitimate national security concerns of Member States must no doubt be fully met, but the acquisition of nuclear weapons by additional States would be as dangerous as the continuation of the nuclear-arms race among the nuclear-weapon States. Building effective barriers against nuclear-weapon proliferation, in all its aspects, must be a foremost priority. In this context I welcome the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in regions in which the interests of the States concerned coincide and where there is wide international support for their establishment.

The primacy of the issue of nuclear weapons cannot, and should not, deflect attention from other weapons of mass destruction, which continue to be a cause of deep and widespread anxiety. Chemical weapons have proliferated alarmingly and there is appalling danger of their actual use in conflicts. The basic issues involved have been brought to the forefront of multilateral negotiations this year. However, the breakthrough that all of us had hoped for has not yet occurred. The remaining obstacles could be overcome by judicious compromise combined with a focus on the main goal. The meeting of the Conference on Disarmament that has been proposed at ministerial level could, with adequate preparation, contribute to this aim. The work necessary for presenting the convention for urgent adherence by all Member States needs to be completed expeditiously. This would be the most effective way to end the menace that the possession of chemical weapons poses to humanity.

At long last, the industrialized countries that dispose of the largest concentration of conventional weapons have come near to reaching agreements in Vienna about a major reduction of such weapons. However, this positive trend is not mirrored in other parts of the globe. The military expenditures of the developing countries have been estimated recently to be nearly one fifth of the budgets of central Governments. During the period when, owing to chronic tensions, the major Power blocs were engaged in an unending arms race, it was difficult to argue that developing countries should institute the process of real disarmament. Now that the global situation has taken a turn for the better, it should be feasible for countries to seek their security at the lowest possible levels of armed forces and armaments.

Since almost all developing countries are largely importers of arms, the decreasing arms transfers in recent years could be construed as a positive trend. However, this decline in weapons imports is primarily due to the current economic difficulties experienced by developing countries rather than substantive changes in their defence postures. The basic prerequisite for reductions in military outlays and weapon purchases will be a change in the political climate marked by reduction of local tensions and the peaceful settlement of disputes as well as the development of regional confidence-building measures.

With significant arms reductions in prospect in Europe, the transfer of surplus weaponry to other parts of the world becomes a disturbing possibility. This gives added urgency to the quest for ways of restraining such transfers; all arms-supplying countries need to be mind-

ful of their responsibility in this respect. I would urge earnest consideration to be given to establishing an international arms transfer register as a step towards curbing what has been a burgeoning trade.

It is, of course, vitally important to provide developing countries unimpeded access to the benefits of modern science and technology. This, however, should not mean that the quantitative arms race is replaced by a qualitative one and high-technology weapons are introduced that would destabilize regional and even global security. I would suggest that the international community make a special effort to clarify the important issues involved and produce clear and fair guidelines acceptable to all. This would remove a great deal of apprehension in a large number of countries that are affected by the supply policies currently applied by exporters of technology.

The process of transition from military to civilian economies may be unsettling and cause some economic disruptions in the short run, but apprehensions on that score must be allayed by considerations of the long-term benefits. A wider exchange of experiences and international co-operation in the area of conversion could help the adjustment process. I believe that the modalities and forms of such exchanges and co-operation will need to be elaborated. Recently, the Secretariat has organized several forums at which high-level discussions have deepened awareness of the issues involved.

The turn for the better in the field of arms limitation provides an impetus and a fresh sense of purpose to the disarmament machinery within the framework of the Organization. The United Nations Disarmament Commission has been reinvigorated by the recent rationalization of its work. The time is ripe to consider streamlining the work of other disarmament bodies as well. This is necessary for enabling the Organization to cope with issues requiring a concerted international effort.

VI

Resolution of conflicts, observance of human rights and the promotion of development together weave the fabric of peace; if one of these strands is removed, the tissue will unravel.

This has been a motif of the thought and work of the United Nations over the years. Current experience strongly confirms the truth that respect for the organs and institutions of the State, national cohesion, the viability of political systems or social ideologies, sustained economic development and the stability of the international order all greatly depend on the observance and promotion of human rights.

The past year has seen the conversion of human rights from a subsidiary theme of the international discourse to a dominant concern. All over the world, there is a resurgent awareness that no social or political dispensation can, or should, endure that does not respect the dignity and worth of the human person, the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.

From its very inception, the United Nations has engaged itself in elaborating human rights instruments and establishing bench-marks against which standards of behaviour can be measured. It has provided the world community with the International Bill of Human Rights, consisting of the Universal Declaration and the two International Covenants, under which the protection of fundamental rights is accepted as a permanent obligation. Under the Organization's auspices, many other legal instruments have been adopted to define these rights in various contexts. The 1986 Declaration on the right to development laid a basis for the integration of human rights concepts into the planning, execution and evaluation of development projects so that respect for human rights and the effectiveness of these projects are both strengthened and secured. The process of incorporating human rights in international conventions is a continuous one. This year, a proposal before the international community is the convention to protect the rights of migrant workers and their families—a group that is among the weakest and most vulnerable in society.

Legal instruments, however, provide but the foundation on which the structure of human rights can be based. It needs initiative, tact, opportunity and co-operation to secure their implementation. Very often, for instance, the Secretary-General has to exercise his good offices in this regard with the utmost confidentiality lest they prove counter-productive. There can be little doubt, however, of the faith and expectations that peoples all over the world place in the efforts of the United Nations to restore human rights where they are denied or violated.

The promising advances of the past year in democracy and human rights should not, however, let us forget the remorseless realities of the world in which we live. Hardly a day passes without bringing news of torture, killings, disappearances of individuals, firing on unarmed demonstrators, of violent suppression of dissidence, of discrimination and deprivation, which point up the gulf between our legal instrumentation and the conditions in which so many of our fellow human beings are condemned to live.

Our aim must be to narrow the gulf between aspiration and fact. Strong and effective international norms are essential, but they are not sufficient. At the national level, a deep-rooted and persuasive human rights culture and the means for its implementation must be nurtured and developed. The World Campaign for Human Rights launched by the United Nations seeks to create a focused awareness of the importance and content of human rights. Another programme for rendering services and technical assistance seeks to further the creation and enhancement of national human rights infrastructures.

In striving to meet the human rights aspirations of all regions, the United Nations relies upon the commitment of non-governmental organizations and the courage and self-sacrifice of individuals throughout the world. They at times put their lives at risk to promote and secure human rights and they deserve our admiration and support. Our Organization should give its close attention to ways and means of assisting and protecting them in their tasks and of stimulating popular association with our ceaseless effort to make a human rights régime encompass the whole world.

The responsibility of the United Nations to monitor human rights situations has also become easier through the ability of the mass media, particularly through the work of conscientious correspondents, to report infringements of the norms of conduct. In many cases, if

not all, gross violations of human rights are rapidly flashed around the globe and arouse moral outrage and protest. This, however, does not always act as an effective deterrent against the flouting of standards agreed to by the international community. The Organization's vigilance should ensure that the human wrongs committed are exposed and condemned so as to prevent their recurrence.

As progress is achieved, demands and expectations rise and the challenges before us continue to grow. I believe that much is at stake in our ability to meet them.

VII

The Charter of the United Nations governs relations between States. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights pertains to relations between the State and the individual. The time has come to devise a covenant regulating relations between humankind and nature.

At present, human beings in their many activities have turned into nature's foes. Now nature is sending us a message: protect nature and survive or destroy nature and perish.

Nearly two decades have passed since the United Nations first put the question of the environment on the global agenda. Although the deterioration of the environment has not yet been arrested, there has been a universal awakening to the profound dangers involved. The solidarity of nations in resolving to meet this unprecedented challenge has been one of the most reassuring phenomena of recent years. The emergence of an "earth patriotism" has led to co-operative efforts at the national and the international levels to ensure that future generations inherit a revived planet. It is now generally acknowledged that both greed and waste, among the economically privileged, and the desperate struggle for survival, among the poor, have despoiled the resources of the earth.

While much has been done in the last few years, the campaign to restore the ecological health of our planet has only just begun. It is obviously necessary to develop an approach which addresses the interrelated issues of environment and economic development in a balanced way, taking into account the legitimate concerns of the developing countries. Indeed, now that the gulf between East and West has closed and there is a sense of common concern, the world community is provided with a long-sought opportunity to refocus its attention on the economic, social and environmental agenda and to adopt a blueprint for concerted action towards environmentally sound and sustainable development. The questions involved bring into sharp relief the interdependence of nations, rich and poor. By their very nature, therefore, they can stimulate perceptions and attitudes which should narrow the gulf between the North and the South.

The Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in 1992, will consider conventions on such critical issues as climate change and biological diversity. It will endeavour to draw up agreements on basic principles to guide international behaviour and co-operation in respect of environment and development and address the complex issues involved in a comprehensive and integrated manner. It will also set an agenda for action into the twenty-first century, and consider the strengthening of relevant institutional mechanisms and processes. As we prepare for it, we must step up our efforts at all levels to prevent further environmental degradation. In this context, I welcome the results achieved at the World Climate Conference in London and at the meeting at Bergen held this year as part of the overall effort, in association with the United Nations system, to create better understanding of the problem and promote the search for solutions.

The initiative for halting environmental damage must no doubt lie, in the first place, with each country, and efforts are indeed being undertaken at the national and regional levels. New partnerships will need to be forged between Governments, the scientific community, industry, media and non-governmental and grass-roots organizations, to ensure the widest possible participation in this effort. Much work has also been done at the multilateral level. Last year, the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depletion, adopted in 1987, came into force. An important step was taken when additional measures were subsequently agreed upon to meet the special needs of developing countries and a fund was established to facilitate transfer of ozone non-depleting technology to them.

A study has been under way, again under the auspices of the United Nations, of the pace, nature and impact of climatic change, and a conference scheduled to take place later this year will constitute another step forward in framing measures to halt the dangerous development of the greenhouse effect. These efforts will culminate, I hope, in the adoption of an international convention on climate change that is expected to be ready for signature at the Conference in 1992.

The increasing support being given to the Convention on the transboundary movement and disposal of hazardous wastes, which was adopted in Basel last year, has been encouraging. Additional guidelines on international trade in certain chemicals have been elaborated, and international codes of conduct, such as the one on the distribution and use of pesticides, expanded and refined. Other measures before the international community focus on building a network of monitoring, research and exchange of data on issues such as transboundary air pollution. An information exchange system continues to expand globally, responding to queries on environmental problems.

We do not have the excuse of ignorance now. The road towards environmental improvement is long, but the journey began with the recognition of our common vulnerability. It is nothing but a movement for survival.

VIII

The forces and pressures of economic life can pull nations together or they can drive them apart. One of the great challenges of the new era is to realize the possibilities of genuine co-operation to the maximum extent that the world's resources and capacities will permit. Lasting peace will necessarily require an improvement in the human condition. This, in turn, can only be achieved through productive patterns of interaction among all members of the international community. For this a renewed commitment and more focused efforts are required to stimulate and achieve economic development and social progress, particularly in the developing countries.

For over 40 years, tension between two ideological blocs influenced and shaped not only political systems, but also economic relations. The world invested enormous resources, financial and human, in developing ingenious means for its own destruction. Now, in the post-cold war world, we have the opportunity to evolve a framework for equitable economic relations as well as security arrangements. This need assumes even greater importance as East-West ideological differences are replaced by the threat of global and regional tensions due to economic and social factors. An aspect of the present crisis in the Middle East is a grim reminder of the disruptive effects of disagreement on the price and supply of a crucial commodity.

The 1980s showed how elusive was the promise of the 1960s and the 1970s for economic betterment and social progress. Although a few countries, most of them in Asia, have made notable progress, three continents, by and large, are no better off today, and a disconcertingly large proportion of their populations are worse off than they were before those decades of hope and high aspirations. The great advances made in science and technology convince us further that it is both possible and necessary to ensure a better future for that large segment of humanity whose constant companion is hunger and disease.

We seem to forget that it is people who must be at the centre of all development and that their well-being cannot be assessed in monetary terms alone. A recent report prepared by the United Nations Development Programme analyses how economic growth translates—or fails to translate—into improving human lives. There has been encouraging progress in some countries in basic human development indicators such as life expectancy, literacy, nutrition and child mortality. But overall there has been an increase in poverty, disease and deprivation. Over-population and rapid urbanization not only create economic and social problems, but also endanger security. Every year, they add millions to the poorest of the world, stifling development efforts and causing alarming increases in social ills such as crime and drug addiction.

If not addressed effectively, the cycle of poverty, population growth, low commodity prices, debt, economic stagnation, destruction of the environment, arms expenditure and the erosion of the social structures in many developing countries will undermine the stability of a global order of peace. Without concerted international action this could cause political, economic and social disorder across the globe. No nation can expect to remain unaffected. There is no room for complacency.

Development must, of course, rest on national efforts to build the necessary institutions and frame the policies through which it can flourish and be shared by all. If the will to do so is lacking or distracted there are very narrow limits to what the international community can do to promote it. But where those national efforts have been seriously embarked upon they need external support and help. Unfortunately the international economic environment has often frustrated what years of arduous development effort and foreign aid tried to achieve.

Almost 10 years of depressed commodity prices, increasing debt-servicing burden and under-funded structural adjustment programmes have seriously weakened the economies of a large number of developing countries and dangerously eroded the social cohesion in these societies.

Development has especially suffered in African countries. Their terms of trade have worsened more than those of any other continent and their infrastructure continues to be inadequate and is eroding in many countries. The international community needs to act speedily to augment support for Africa, particularly through increases in financial flows, debt forgiveness, trade liberalization and appropriate measures to deal with the commodity problem, including the stabilization of commodity prices.

The least developed countries, most of which are in Africa, face acute problems and remain marginalized in the fundamental transformations that are taking place in the world economy. At the second United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries efforts are under way to identify impediments to their development, and agree on urgent and far-reaching measures to reverse the present trends.

The distortions in the international economy are also reflected at the national level where parallel societies are growing apart, one rich and privileged and the other poor and dispossessed. In developing countries, it means the emergence of two societies, one having access to the levers of power and the other lacking it; the result is political and social instability. In industrialized societies, it manifests itself in tension and crime. National economic policies must address these contradictions and ensure that economic and social progress is shared by all.

At the present time, a number of short-term exigencies present themselves to the international community as the result of the crisis in the Middle East. The ability of the United Nations to cope with man-made disasters is once again being put to the test. It is apparent that the repercussions of this crisis will aggravate the economic problems of the international community and can wreak havoc on the economies of certain countries. The severity of these costs will depend on whether the conflict can be contained and how it is resolved. This notwithstanding, serious efforts need to be urgently made to mitigate the economic and social consequences of this crisis and to see how to provide a safety net for developing countries ill-equipped to cope with such situations.

Whatever the outcome of the present crisis, some issues of longer standing seem particularly important, all of them calling for far-sightedness and imagination in finding an adequate international response that would enable the developing countries to renew the process of growth and development.

The first is the problem of external indebtedness of the developing countries. It is now obvious that the magnitude and seriousness of this problem demands a comprehensive and truly decisive approach. The progressive deepening of the debt crisis, since 1982, constitutes a grave threat to the political, social and economic order in many of the affected countries. It is also a burdensome constraint on the international economy with adverse consequences even for creditor countries.

The most debilitating consequence of the debt problem is the large net transfers of financial resources from debtor countries to their creditors. Developing countries, which need to supplement their meagre internal

savings with external finance, have now for over 10 years been providing the world economy with resources which they themselves urgently require for their own development. In 1989 alone, this net outflow of resources amounted to $US 26 billion. These negative transfers must be eliminated quickly and eventually reversed. Debt and debt service reduction have a central role to play in this regard. The ongoing efforts by private and official creditors as well as by multilateral financial institutions to address the debt problem need urgently to be broadened and intensified. A number of new and practical ideas for addressing commercial as well as official debt are now available, and I welcome the interest elicited by the report on external debt recently submitted by my personal representative.

Second, but equally critical, is the question of the international trade régime and the soon to be concluded Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. The declared commitment of the industrialized countries to achieve substantial results is encouraging. However, the negotiations so far reveal that the interests and concerns of the economically weaker developing countries are not being fully taken into consideration. A balanced outcome that benefits all nations and that secures access for developing countries to the existing trading blocs as well as to the emerging big markets should be the main objective of the Uruguay Round. The vulnerability of the developing countries in these negotiations must not be used to extend or impose the national interests of major trading countries in ways detrimental to the functioning of the international trade and payments system over the long run.

Third, the instability and the continued depressed prices for commodities, which are the prime source of export earnings for most of the developing countries in Africa and Latin America, and to some extent Asia, are further impeding their efforts to diversify and revitalize their economies. Policies for diversification of these economies will need to be pursued and supported in a variety of ways, including the promotion of greater stability and higher commodity prices. To a large extent, existing commodity agreements have suffered and indeed failed to achieve their objectives because of inadequate financial resources. There is need to examine anew the modalities and functioning of international commodity agreements with a view to ensuring their effectiveness for both producers and consumers.

Fourth, the process of integration of the Soviet and the Eastern European economies into the international financial and trading régimes needs to be supported to ensure a smooth transition. The opening of this region to international trade presents a great opportunity for the world economy as a whole. Our common objective must be to ensure a positive transformation of Eastern European countries concurrently with the development of the developing countries. The commitment of the industrialized countries not to weaken their support for the developing nations is therefore central to this objective.

The complexity of international global economic problems, their interrelationships and their close links with social and political issues dictate a sounder management of the global economy. Already, the economic integration of Western Europe and the creation of trading blocs is raising apprehensions about access to these markets. It is also feared that these developments may lead to a fragmentation of the international trading system, exacerbate existing trade tensions and further marginalize the majority of the developing countries. I am also concerned about the increased reliance on bilateral and plurilateral arrangements rather than on multilateral rules for trade liberalization.

Conditions at the end of the Second World War influenced the shaping of international institutional arrangements for political and economic relations in the post-war period. For the past 25 years, major industrialized countries have periodically sought to co-ordinate their macro-economic policies outside the framework of existing multilateral institutions with varying degrees of success. Now, the more complex challenges of a new era such as preserving the health of our planet and combating drug abuse demand a global response. Systematic and institutionalized co-ordination of the global economy within these institutions would help achieve greater coherence in national and international strategies for economic and social development and ensure more disciplined economic behaviour by all.

We must utilize the experience of the past to develop a vision for our common future. The weaknesses and the strengths not only of the competing ideologies but also of a world order reflecting tension between them have become quite apparent. We know that the restructuring of economic systems will not by itself satisfy popular aspirations for social justice and equity. Indeed, the fundamental principles of social welfare and services such as education, medical care, social security, housing and employment will remain valid whatever the orientation of the ideology pursued.

A process of serious evaluation and a subtle transformation of international institutions has already begun. A more equitable and efficient system of economic relations should benefit from their strengths and advantages. At its special session on international economic co-operation last April, the General Assembly reaffirmed the special role of the Organization as a forum where central issues of importance to humanity can be addressed in an integrated manner. The renewal of multilateralism will enhance the capacity of the United Nations to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the post-cold war international order.

The transition to that order will inevitably be fraught with difficulties. During this period, we may witness intense competition among economic super-Powers or blocs not only to gain economic advantage, but also to influence the shaping of the new rules of the game. The consequences for the global economy could be serious. The economic tension will affect prospects of a more peaceful international atmosphere where objectives of development and social progress could be pursued with greater determination. In these circumstances, how the United Nations, and particularly the Economic and Social Council, effectively addresses economic concerns and promotes legitimate aspirations in order to forestall conflict and reduce tensions assumes particular urgency.

The growing international consensus is contributing to a greater awareness of the close relationship between political and security considerations and economic and social issues. As the work of the Security Council demonstrates a new sense of purpose and a fresh determination to protect and promote peace, one should like to see a similar development in the Economic and Social Council. In this context, I welcome the decision

of the Council to consider the implications of the evolution of the East-West relations for the world economy, and in particular the developing countries, at a high-level special meeting next year. I have consistently maintained that high-level and more focused meetings of the Council on important policy questions and developments will have a positive impact on the role and functioning of this body. A revitalized Council, meeting at ministerial level, could provide the framework for evolving economic and social policy guidelines which contribute to the process of promoting stability based on balanced economic development and social justice.

There is, however, a need for the United Nations, including its intergovernmental structures in the economic and social sector, to be more responsive to the emerging needs of, and new challenges faced by, the international community. As political rhetoric recedes, a higher degree of specialization will be needed to strengthen the technical underpinnings for the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

IX

The sources of disorder and potential conflict in the world today are not confined to political tensions and economic disparities. An equal cause of derangement is the social crisis that has crossed all frontiers, regional or cultural. Now that common sense is beginning to replace the ideological obsessions of yesterday, sustained attention must be devoted to the ills that afflict society at present. Neither can diagnosis be attempted nor remedies prescribed in terms of one nation or group of nations alone; both approach and action need to be global.

The scourge that has been caused by widespread psychological and social dislocation takes its most pronounced form in drug abuse and trafficking. This inflicts damage at all levels: in addition to the strain on familial and social relations, there is the high cost to society in general – in terms of health care, in increased risk of accidents, in lost industrial productivity, and in the higher incidence of crime and threats to the civic order which have been the cause of so much misery in so many countries. Another danger associated with intravenous drug abusers is the high risk of spreading the AIDS pandemic.

The General Assembly, at its last session, took drug-abuse control as one of its main themes. This was followed by the convening of the seventeenth special session of the General Assembly concentrating specifically on drugs. It led to the adoption of a political declaration and a global programme of action which will entail an improvement and widening of our existing efforts to combat drug abuse.

As with so many other programmes requiring priority attention, the resources currently available to the United Nations for drug-abuse control are paltry compared to the magnitude of the problem. In order to make a tangible impact on drug abuse and trafficking world wide, very considerable additional funding would be necessary. Moreover, our existing institutional arrangements need to be streamlined and made more effective—a matter under serious consideration at present.

Comprehensive legal instruments have been drawn up over the years within the framework of the United Nations, culminating in the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. The Convention will enter into force later this year. I would urge States that have not done so to ratify it without further delay and, even before this, to implement its provisions rigorously in order to fight this pestilence.

One of the darker aspects of the rapid societal change of the recent past is the upsurge in crime in many countries, particularly in its organized and transnational forms. This year, the Organization convened the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders at Havana. The Congress adopted important operational guidelines, standards and model agreements, which aim at intensifying the fight against crime at the national, regional and international levels and further improving the performance of criminal justice systems.

The growing world-wide recognition of the need to strengthen the rule of law in international relations was crystallized, at the last session of the General Assembly, in the declaration of the 1990s as the Decade of International Law. A notable achievement in this context, after nine years of negotiations, was the adoption by the General Assembly of the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries. This Convention will outlaw the activities of soldiers of fortune who so often were employed to destabilize the countries in which they operated and who indulged in plunder with impunity.

The campaign against grave afflictions is only one part of the global social strategy. Equally important is constructive action to revive basic social institutions and to end discrimination against, or ill-treatment of, some of society's major segments.

At the root of the problems confronting us is the breakup of basic social structures, leaving the individual shelterless against violent social pressures and disruptions. As the family is the basic unit of society, an agent of development as well as a support for the individual, the General Assembly last year decided to observe 1994 as the International Year of the Family. Fundamentally important in this context is the role of women. The recent activities of the world Organization on their behalf have included an appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, five years after their adoption, and the decision taken to convene a World Conference on Women in 1995. The tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was another milestone: 103 Member States have ratified or acceded to the Convention.

It is children, however, who are the most vulnerable segment of society. The United Nations Children's Fund supported the initiative of Heads of State to hold a World Summit for Children here at United Nations Headquarters this year in order to promote commitment, at the highest political level, to goals and strategies for ensuring the survival, protection and well-being of children as key elements in social development. The occasion is remarkable for being the first summit of leaders from the North, the South, the East and the West and thus facilitating dialogue on a universal scale.

Further efforts will have to be planned to address those issues that will most critically affect children in the decades ahead.

Last year, a landmark was reached when the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is the first legal instrument to define and lend content to children's rightful status in society. The emergence of an international consensus for strengthened multilateral co-operation focusing on children can be a development of far-reaching significance. It is particularly encouraging that this Convention came into force earlier this month, which was less than a year after its adoption—a very rapid pace indeed for an international treaty.

It is, however, chastening to observe that much of the progress we are making in repairing social structures and protecting the rights of women and children is threatened, and often reversed, by the explosion in population. The global population, now standing at 5.3 billion, increases by 250,000 every single day, or almost 1 billion in the span of 10 years. Well over 90 per cent of that growth will occur in the poorest countries. There is thus an unmanageable increase in the numbers to be fed, clothed and sheltered. This has over-strained the capacity of developing countries to provide employment, housing, infrastructure and related services. Unless this trend is arrested, there will be social chaos in large parts of the world.

Experience has shown that population and family planning programmes, working in unison with other social and economic development efforts, are effective in leading to the desired result. The freedom of choice that flows from improved access to family planning, education and health care and enhanced status for women is crucial.

Efforts in this field need to be strengthened. The International Meeting on Population, planned for 1994, will provide a much-needed opportunity to review progress at the mid-point of the decade. At the same time, the world Organization will need to implement the provisions of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 and deal with the increasing environmental degradation in order to provide the most basic needs for the world's peoples.

X

Forty years ago, the hope was entertained that the refugee problem would be temporary and easily manageable. The fact that the United Nations, through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, has to cope with refugee situations in undiminished numbers testifies to the frequency, persistence and severity of conflicts in the world today.

Regional conflicts continue to cause mass migrations. The exodus caused by the current crisis in the Persian Gulf is a most painful example of the disruptions in the lives of human beings, which are due to political upheavals. Some refugee situations have persisted and durable solutions have to be found for them. The international environment has become generally less receptive for refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced persons.

In Africa, civil strife continues to take a mounting toll of human lives. Grave social problems have developed with increasing numbers of internally and externally displaced people, the destruction of towns and villages and the isolation by war of communities from sources of essential supplies. The result has been destitution, homelessness and famine on a large scale.

In most cases, the Governments concerned have sought the help of the United Nations system. I have repeatedly emphasized that the cardinal principle of humanitarian programmes is that such help is neutral in nature and must be made available without discrimination to all in need and regardless of their location. It is equally vital that relief operations are assured of the full support and co-operation of the parties to the conflict, and that United Nations relief convoys and relief workers are given safe and secure access to the intended beneficiaries.

The settlement of political issues in some areas has brought immediate relief. In Namibia, for example, thousands of Namibians were repatriated as part of the independence plan for that country. Significant progress is also being made in South Africa, giving rise to the hope that a political settlement will bring an end to the conditions that have caused several thousand South Africans to seek refuge outside their country. This could also have a beneficial impact on an even larger number of Mozambicans who have been uprooted and displaced. In Central America, members of the Nicaraguan resistance and their families were voluntarily demobilized and are being repatriated, and their safety upon return monitored. Voluntary repatriation of Salvadorians increased in late 1989 and early 1990.

Contrasted with these encouraging developments, however, are instances where initial expectations of settlement have not yet been fulfilled. Stalled by the difficult political situation in Afghanistan, over 3 million refugees remain in Pakistan, and over 2 million in Iran. The situation in Cambodia also awaits a political agreement, making the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Cambodian refugees and displaced persons currently impossible. This means that the situation of refugees in South-East Asia, including Vietnamese and Lao asylum-seekers and refugees, continues to be a serious problem for the international community.

In Africa, despite progress in the southern part of the continent, the numbers of refugees are increasing. Malawi, Somalia, the Sudan, Uganda, and, most recently, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone, all experienced additional or new influxes. Events in Mauritania and Senegal caused large-scale displacement of people from both countries. The biggest influx has been of nearly 500,000 Liberians escaping civil strife in their country.

To partially alleviate the human suffering, emergency assistance is rendered in difficult geographical conditions, marked by a desperate lack of resources and infrastructure. In co-operation with other agencies, the World Food Programme acts promptly to relieve hunger to the extent its resources permit.

Natural disasters also cause death, suffering and displacement on a large scale. It is a preoccupation of the Organization to provide help through the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator. The United Nations has taken a new approach to mitigate their catastrophic effects. The declaration by the Gen-

eral Assembly of the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction embodies a significant conceptual move from post-disaster response to pre-disaster preparedness. Too often in recent years the world has experienced huge population losses and immense economic plight due to endemic weaknesses in housing, infrastructure and other resources essential for rehabilitation. Considering recent earthquakes in the Soviet Union and Mexico, and this year in Iran and the Philippines, it is plain that the advances made by science and technology in our age could be utilized to minimize the devastation caused by such occurrences in vulnerable areas.

XI

It is clear from the foregoing that the past year has brought new tasks and fresh challenges, some unprecedented, to the Organization. Many new initiatives are already in prospect, and we enter the decade with greater capability to fulfil the enlarged role that is being assigned to the Organization. Additional responsibilities, however, mean new administrative and financial requirements.

Following the reform programme instituted by General Assembly resolution 41/213, the Secretariat has undergone a major internal restructuring and considerable reduction in staff. At the same time, new procedures have enhanced mutual confidence between Member States and the Secretariat in administrative and financial matters. By adopting all relevant resolutions without a vote, the last session of the General Assembly showed greater convergence of views on questions related to administration, budget and management. Equally encouraging were the consensus votes on revised estimates and the programme budget for 1990-1991.

The reforms in the budgetary process have thus concluded the first cycle and, I believe, have largely achieved their purpose. They have brought about a better awareness among Member States—and within the Secretariat—of the way in which the United Nations utilizes its resources, and encouraged their more judicious use. They have also largely allayed the concerns of the major contributors. This is the result of fruitful co-operation between all Member States and the Secretariat.

A fundamental requirement for enhanced organizational effectiveness is the availability of relevant and accurate information to managers. The creation of an integrated management information system that I proposed will facilitate decentralized management, while providing centralized access world wide. This system, which is scheduled to become operational in 1993, will enable us to analyse, plan and allocate resources in the most efficient manner.

The extraordinary expansion in field operations combining peace-making and peace-keeping has stretched both our human and financial resources. This is evident at the planning and preparatory as well as the executory stages. Early and sound planning is essential to promote the chances of success, especially in cases of complex, multi-functional operations working within a narrow time-frame—of which the Namibia undertaking was a prime example.

Unfortunately, such thorough advance preparation has become increasingly difficult because of the overall depletion in the Organization's resources. I find it inexplicable that many Member States of the United Nations fail to fulfil their financial obligations on time and in full, thus endangering the Organization's financial stability. To date this year, only 57 Governments have fully paid their assessed contributions for the regular budget. Currently, the Organization is owed about $660 million by its Members for the regular budget, which means that we have funds for only 24 further days of operation. Moreover, peace-keeping assessments unpaid by Member States now total an additional $436 million.

This is the bleak picture at a time when many hopes and expectations are being placed in the work of the United Nations. Day by day, new initiatives are brought to its legislative bodies: in peace-making or peace-keeping, in such matters as human rights, environmental protection and narcotics control, as well as in many other areas wherein co-ordination through the United Nations is vital. The weakness of the Organization's finances jeopardizes the desired projects, despite all the economies and the reforms we have effected. If all Governments do not meet their financial obligations fully, and within the proper time-frame, the Organization will not be able to play the role expected of it by the Governments and peoples of the world. That dismaying moment could be close at hand.

These circumstances of inability and constraint provide an ironical contrast to the impressive dedication and the skills demonstrated by the Organization's staff, often under extremely trying circumstances, in field operations and missions. Equally, staff at Headquarters have admirably shouldered increased responsibilities due to post reductions and to the absence of key personnel serving in missions abroad. The high standard of performance expected of United Nations staff has again pointed to the need to employ men and women of the highest calibre, with the widest geographical distribution and range of skills. Unfortunately, the United Nations has fallen seriously behind in the level of remuneration it offers and is, in many fields, no longer financially competitive. This fact is well known to Member States and I would urge them to earnestly consider remedial action. It should be recognized that the present situation affects the Organization's capacity to deliver results and it weakens the morale of the staff, which is so highly important at a time when the Organization is undergoing rapid change and when such heavy demands are being placed on its human resources.

XII

Public perceptions of the United Nations, of its essentiality and its work have radically changed during the last two years. While earlier it was regarded in some circles as a tower of Babel and at best a venue for often fruitless diplomatic parleys, it is now seen as a centre of agreement and decision, a barrier against chaos in international relations and the one institution which can best assure that the actions of nations are governed by international law and respond to the demands of justice.

I believe this carries important policy implications for the Governments of Member States. They can draw

strength from the widening peace constituency which exists in all countries—and whose concerns are so well articulated by non-governmental organizations, especially in the fields of disarmament, human rights and the environment. However, to do this and to be able in difficult situations to adjust their attitudes and policies to the Charter of the United Nations, Governments need to regard the Organization as a source of unique assistance to them in unravelling issues which touch other nations, in settling international disputes and in responding to the emerging challenges confronting the global society. The Charter needs to be viewed not as an external and onerous appendage but as a body of principles which must govern the life of every nation.

There is not, and there cannot be, an adversarial relation between the United Nations and any Member State. In situations of conflict, only the procedures of multilateralism as developed and employed by the United Nations can offer justice and dignified disengagement to the parties involved and to their supporters.

If there is anything plain from the evolution of international affairs, it is that neither in the current nor in any foreseeable situation can there be any Power or group of Powers which will have a limitless freedom of manoeuvre and the political capability to impose its own values or world view on others. This, however, does not detract in the slightest degree from the position of respect that a Power or group of Powers can command at the United Nations through its resources of knowledge and experience and its ability to take a lead in shaping the universal agenda. A changing, turbulent world may not sustain hegemonies, global or regional, but it is receptive to influence, especially the influence that comes from statesmanship and consistent conformity with international law. The greater the Power, the higher is the responsibility to act and to be seen to act with justice. This is true as much of States as of the Organization as a whole and of its organs.

I believe that it has been a wholesome development of recent years that the international discourse has been disburdened of excessive ideological or rhetorical baggage. It is far easier to accommodate contentious interests or claims, honestly stated, than to reconcile opposing doctrines. If the new mood of pragmatism which has released us from the thraldom of the cold war is to spread all over the world, nations need to shed the vestigial prejudices of former times and couch their dialogue in terms of common sense and plain justice. International morality should not be confused with moralistic stances which can conceal the truth of a situation. Since notions of legitimacy are sometimes bound to clash, the only safeguard against issues becoming intractable is recourse to the principles stated in the Charter and accepted by all nations.

A formative point has been reached in the world's struggle towards stability and well-being. Stability will not mean stasis. Peace will not bring the cessation of all conflict. It will only make conflicts manageable through means other than force or intimidation. In the words of one of the intellectual progenitors of the United Nations, Immanuel Kant, peace will mean "equilibrium in liveliest competition". The United Nations seeks to train our vision towards that end.

Javier PÉREZ DE CUÉLLAR
Secretary-General

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Litho in United Nations, New York 00400 40071—January 1991—4,575
ISSN 0082-8173